



ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

OF

COLEFORD

(County of Gloucester),

FOR THE YEAR 1920.

ARTHUR T. BRIGHT, PRINTER, COLEFORD.



Medical Officer's Report for 1920.

TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COLEFORD URBAN DISTRICT.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,—

I beg to present to you my Annual Report.

The Coleford Urban District consists of the town of Coleford, the Scowles and Whitecliff, together with the surrounding portions of Berry Hill, Lane End and Milkwall. The town itself is centred between the four latter districts, and is on a lower level than all of them, excepting Whitecliff, which is some 375 feet above sea level. The highest point is Berry Hill (751 feet) and the town itself is 558 feet above sea level.

The area of the district comprises 2,235 acres, and the census in 1911 showed a population of 2,604, occupying 566 separate dwellings. The number is divided approximately thus:—Coleford, 1,172; Lane End, 574; the Scowles, 256; Berry Hill, 247; Milkwall, 192; Whitecliff, 133; Poolway, 50.

The district lies on the edge of the Forest of Dean Coalfield, the outcrop of the coal measures dividing it into two almost equal parts by a line running roughly from North to South. The eastern half has a clay soil, lying above the coal measures: the western half lies above the limestone and iron ore measures.

The natural drainage of the district comes from three valleys, running due east, north east and north west. The streams flowing thence unite within the town, and the brook formed escapes in a south westerly direction through Whitecliff into the Wye.

The chief industries carried on in the district are coal mining, quarrying, iron mining and agriculture.

No trades specially injurious to health are carried on.

The health of the district was bad generally in the early months of the year, several people dying of Influenza, which was

of a very severe type and became so prevalent that it was deemed advisable to close the Schools until the epidemic had abated. In May there was also a rather severe epidemic of Scarlet Fever, but there was no death. During the last six months of the year however, there was very little sickness, as evidenced by the freedom from notifications of infectious diseases generally, and the low mortality shown by the Registrar's death returns, only 11 deaths being registered during these months. The excessive amount of rain we had in the Summer months made it unnecessary to cut off the water supply at all. Plans and arrangements were also put in hand concerning the building of the proposed new houses and early this year a good commencement had been made.

SANITARY INSPECTOR.

Mr. H. Vaughan has been appointed Sanitary Inspector in place of Mr. W. H. Davis, who resigned to take up another appointment under the West Dean Council.

VITAL STATISTICS.

The population of the district is now 2,487 for both deaths and births, according to the Registrar General's return, a different calculation for deaths and births not being now necessary, as the mortality due to the war has now ceased. The population has decreased to about that estimated in 1900. The population recorded at the last census taken in 1911 was 2,604.

The Registrar General's returns for births during the past year were 81, more than double those of last year, this being the largest number of births for over 30 years. There were 35 boys and 46 girls. Three of these were illegitimate, viz.: 2 girls and 1 boy. The birth rate is therefore about $3\frac{1}{4}$ per 100, 32.5 per 1,000. The birth rate for England and Wales is 25.4 per 1,000.

The total deaths number 36, the death rate being 14.4. The death rate for England and Wales is 12.5 per 1,000.

Three children died under 1 year of age; one of Pneumonia, one of Bronchitis, and the third of convulsions, having been weakly from birth. No child died of stomach or bowel trouble, so that we have no death resulting from improper feeding. I think we can certainly give the nurses credit for this. The death rate for children under 1 year is 37.0 per 1,000 births. Six people lived to be over 80, 13 to over 70. We cannot yet congratulate ourselves that half the deaths reached three score and ten. Two however lived to 90 and over, one of these reaching the age of

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97. Two people died of Cancer and 2 of Lung Consumption, making a death rate of 0.8 per 1,000 respectively; 4 of Heart Disease, making a death rate of 1.6 per 1,000; Five people died of Pneumonia, following Influenza, making a death rate of 2.0 per 1,000.

WATER SUPPLY.

The town of Coleford is at present mainly dependant for its water upon a stream which, issuing from the coal measures, is passed through a sand bed, and is then collected in a receiver. From this it passes by gravity to the town. The head of the stream nowhere in Coleford rises above the ground floor of any house. It is generally in the Summer months so scanty that we have to husband it most carefully. The scantiness was not, however, felt so severely last year, because the rainfall was considerably above the average, but the partial obliteration of the bore of the pipes, due to the deposit of mineral salts inside them, greatly diminishes their efficacy.

The scanty supply of some cottages, where this supply is too far away to be available, is most serious, being totally inadequate for the necessities of the people. It has not been found necessary to curtail the available quantity, however, during the past Summer. But this is quite an exceptional event.

On account of the scanty supply we cannot use the water for flushing the sewers.

Four samples were submitted to the officials, analysed, and passed as wholesome.

One well has been sunk.

No well has been closed.

The West Dean Council are of opinion that their new supply will be available to us in a year.

HOUSING.

The question of providing more housing accommodation is now assuming a practical solution. 42 new residences have been begun at High Nash; advancement has been made in all these, eight of them having reached the first floor; all of them have progressed beyond the foundations. For the present it is intended to sink two wells, one on either side of the road, and

to pump water into storage tanks of a holding capacity of 60 gallons each, and from these to supply the necessary flushing, bath and culinary requirements. It is hoped that through the new scheme of water supply of West Dean there will be a sufficiency of water laid on to the houses within 12 months. It is proposed to dispose of the sewage by means of a septic tank, on the lower side of the road, at the most dependent point. No new houses have been begun in Victoria Road or in Albert Road.

54 houses have been inspected and 26 houses have been brought to the notice of landlords or tenants as suffering from defects. All these have been remedied.

No house has been condemned, though 7 are unfit for human habitation. The condition of the houses in Coleford Urban District is on the whole good, but some few of them are very old and built against banks of earth.

The one Lodging House has been inspected 39 times.

Slaughter-houses (3), 84 times.

Bake-houses (7), 24 times.

Dairies, Cow-sheds, etc. (19), 84 times.

Workshops (17), 45 times.

During the inspections the following defects were remedied :—

1. Arrangement for preventing contamination of water supply—2.

2. Closet accommodation—2.

3. Drainage—4.

4. (a) Light insufficient—2. (b) Cleanliness—1.

5. Sanitary condition of house unsatisfactory—1.

3 complaints were received by Members of the Council.

Under Section 15, Housing Town Planning, etc., Act, 1909 :—
26 houses were inspected ; 16 had defects remedied.

16 houses were found defective under other Sections of Public Health Acts and were remedied.

Under the Housing Improvement and Structural Alterations, 7 houses were inspected and improved.

7 complaints were brought to the notice of Officials of the Council and were remedied.

No houses were demolished.

9 cases of overcrowding were reported.

None could be abated.

3 houses were cleaned on notice.

1 house had to be connected to a sewer.

36 nuisances were abated.

26 Preliminary Notices were served.

2 Statutory Notices were served.

No person was summoned.

SEWERAGE.

The condition of the brook as the main sewer for the town of Coleford remains the same, the condition of the old stone sewers also. Several of the old drains have become blocked, needing attention, and entailing in one case relaying for some distance with glazed pipes. Nature having provided us this past year with an abundant flushing supply, the brook and the old drains have not been in such a dangerous condition as in past years.

In the town and some other parts of the district the bucket system is used to minimise as much as is possible the passing of more sewage into the brook. Where it is possible privy middens are being replaced by septic tanks. The refuse is either used on the gardens or removed by the Scavenger once a week. Sewage buckets are also emptied by him once a week.

There are no fixed ashpits, either in combination with privies or alone.

The surface drains still do duty also as sewers.

1 pail closet was constructed.

1 earth closet was converted into a pail closet.

The approximate number of :—

Privies with fixed receptacles—227.

Bucket closets—191.

Fresh water closets—95.

Waste water and hand flushed—53.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

25 cases occurred during the past year. Of these 13 were due to Scarlet Fever, 1 to Enteric Fever, and the remaining 11 to Pneumonia following Influenza. The case of Typhoid Fever occurred at Pingry Farm. The supplying of milk was stopped, all precautions for preventing the disease from spreading were taken, and there was no other person infected. In May there was a rather formidable outbreak of Scarlet Fever.

There has been no outbreak of Measles.

There were a few cases of Whooping Cough.

Influenza was very severe in the beginning months of the year, and was of a formidable type, leading in many cases to Pneumonia, the patients frequently exhibiting symptoms closely allied to sleeping sickness. Early and frequent injections of anti-influenza vaccine were of great and undoubted benefit. Proper feeding and restraint in bed were also strongly indicated.

Thirteen houses were disinfected by means of Formalin Spraying and Sulphur Fumigation.

A disinfecter for clothes, bedding, etc., is urgently needed.

An Isolation Hospital also, or, failing that, some arrangement should be made with the East Dean authorities.

BYE-LAWS.

No changes or additions have been made to the existing Bye-laws.

SCHOOLS.

The water supply to the Schools is meagre and quite insufficient.

The sanitary system is as good as is possible considering the defective condition of the sewers.

The Schools were closed from March 12th to April 1st.

During the recess they were thoroughly fumigated with disinfectants.

PROSECUTIONS.

No person was prosecuted, neither did the necessity to issue a summons occur.

FOOD.

The following articles of food were condemned, surrendered, and destroyed: — Beef, 20lbs.; Mutton, 179lbs.; Corned Beef, Tongue, etc., 50lbs.; Fruit and Vegetables, 46lbs.; Condensed Milk, 7 tins; Tripe, 20lbs.

GENERAL NEEDS.

The roads on the Land Society at Lane End, and those belonging to the Urban Council at Milkwall, are very bad, the one in Campbell Road being especially dangerous. They urgently require proper attention.

The urgent requirements are:—

An efficient Sewerage Scheme.

An Isolation Hospital.

A Disinfectant.

J. ROWLAND PAYNE,

Medical Officer of Health, Coleford Urban District.

